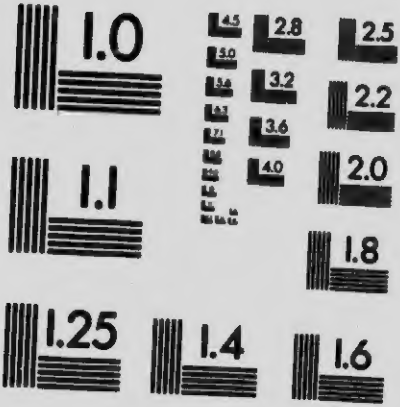
MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

Can. Campbell, Robert.
Can.

With D. Campbell's best regards.

Farewell Sermon

Delivered by Rev. ROBERT CAMPBELL, D.D., on retiring from the Ministry of St. Gabriel Church, Montreal, October 3, 1909

MONTREAL
The Witness Press
1909

AC901
C5
no. C327
P+x+

Farewell Sermon

"And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified."—Acts 20: 32.

In bidding you farewell, as the people to whom I have ministered so long, and reviewing my forty-three years' pastorate, my remarks necessarily take a narrative form, as the apology for my life, to use Newman's famous phrase; and I crave indulgence for speaking so much in the first person.

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY.

Trained in the best traditions of the Church of Scotland, the ministers and professors at whose feet I sat for instruction having been born and bred in the old land, at a period when that school of preachers, of which Dr. Chalmers was the great exponent, and which I may call the intellectual-evangelical school, exercised a powerful influence on the pulpit of Scotland, it was my good fortune to spend more than a year in Great Britain after receiving license in Canada, and enjoy the privilege of hearing many of the eminent men in the early sixties of the nineteenth century who belonged to that school: Caird, Guthrie, Candlish, Norman MacLeod, Arnott, and Cumming, among the foremost of them. It was from these sources joined to the guidance and stimulus gained from the lectures of my professors and the careful study of Vinet's pastoral theology, that my ideal of the Christian ministry was formed.

PLAN OF SERVICE.

Curious to compare my plan of life with its performance, last week I sought and found the faded manuscript containing my first sermon in old St.

Gabriel Church, preached from the text: "I magnify mine office." The composition was jejune enough, but the ideas in it I do not need to revise. The standard I set before myself was high, and I have ever at least had it in view, although too often, I painfully acknowledge, I have come far short of it

My next sermon in St Gabriel's has also been preserved. It was from the text: "I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me," and dealt with what I then conceived to be the reasonable expectations which congregations should form of their ministers. Imperfect enough in form and style though it was, I do not find occasion to revise it either, so far as its main ideas are concerned. I had already exercised elsewhere a pastorate of nearly five years, with its invaluable experience. I have striven along the lines laid down in those two sermons, both for myself and the people among whom I have gone out and in.

LEADERS IN REVIVING OLD ST. GABRIEL'S.

My congregation at the start was very small, but it was well led by earnest and thoughtful men, among them Chief Bertram, George Cruickshank, Douglas Brymner, James Robertson, W. L. Haldimand (the only one of them still living), James Lillie, Charles Esplin, William Reid, and Sub-Chief, afterwards Chief, Patton—William Darling and A. B. Stuart connecting themselves with it a few months later. They and I entered upon our common task with stout hearts. Up to about 1860 the merchants and professional men of Montreal, for the most part, lived over their offices and warehouses, but before 1866, when I entered upon my ministry here, the drift of the well-to-do population towards the suburbs had already set in, and the churches of all denominations in due time followed, leaving the old city almost deserted. The valiant souls already mentioned, with others interested in maintaining ordinances in the venerable edifice in St. Gabriel Street, resolved to make a stand for the old cause, and I was to be the standard-bearer. We succeeded in rallying to the

cause Presbyterians of different connections, who felt that the east end ought not to be neglected, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, to which the property in St. Gabriel Street, after being occupied by the Canada Presbyterian Church for twenty years, had reverted in 1864. It helped the cause in some measure that the old Church was the first religious home of Presbyterianism in Montreal. But while the remembrance of its ancient glories gave to the venerable structure an interest in the hearts of old friends, it is sometimes a doubtful advantage to have to revive a decayed cause. However, perseverance was rewarded, and in due time St. Gabriel Church regained its former strength in the number of its communicants and in its financial showing.

ACCESSIONS FROM THE HOMELAND.

They were mainly people from the Old Country whom I was called to serve, well-read and thoughtful men and women; and from the start I had an incentive to do the best in my power to keep at least abreast of my hearers in all that pertained to the religious life. During my whole ministry, indeed, recruits from the fatherland have joined us, people with the mental grip distinguishing those educated in the parish schools and trained in Scottish and north of Ireland homes, and able to appreciate the most carefully-prepared discourses, who have helped to maintain the standard of religious intelligence among us.

MINISTER THE LEADER.

The people have a right to expect leadership from their ministers, leadership in thought as well as action; and my aim has honestly been to acquire such stores of knowledge of things new and old as I might deal out to them for their spiritual profit. The Master's instruction to Peter to feed the lambs, and the young sheep as well as the old flock, I have endeavored to bear in mind, providing milk for babes

and strong meat for those requiring it, dividing to each his portion, and speaking words in season to all and sundry, but I have been at the same time under the compelling idea that unless I was fitted to lead the people beyond themselves into realms of experience, observation, and thought which they had not reached, I had no business in the pulpit. I confess to an almost morbid dread of the commonplace. The rôle of the demagogue is to flatter the people by reflecting their own opinions. This makes his utterances palatable; but it does not make for the people's profit. Those are the discourses which profit that lead the hearers on to higher things. It is not so easy, however, nor perhaps so pleasant for them to yield the attention demanded by the preacher who strives to produce each Lord's Day the best sermons in his power, discourses over which his mind has long brooded, and freshly coined in the mint of his own experience, thought, and observation.

VALUE OF LONG MINISTRY.

A minister who has occupied the same pulpit continuously for upwards of forty years, if he has been at all a diligent student, aiming at teaching all the things which the Lord commanded, as expounded by the Apostles, must necessarily have ranged over a vast field of religious truth; and as I look over the huge collection of discourses which I have preserved, I find that they are taken up with such aspects of truth as my reading and reflection, under the prompting of the spirit of God, from time to time suggested. It ought to be an immense advantage to a congregation to be carried over the vast and varied regions of divine revelation set forth in the Word of God, during a lengthened ministry, as it is an unquestionable advantage to preachers to be obliged to go on adding to their own stores of religious knowledge without repeating themselves. These advantages are secured in the life-pastorate, which is the ideal of the Presbyterian Church. A writer in the *British Weekly* recently put the matter ably and well, as follows:

"The long pastorate is a less frequent thing than it used to be. I think those who sustain it—especially in a city—and retain the affectionate loyalty of young as well as old, ought to be honored. To use a common phrase, they are one of the church's most valuable assets. For, to my mind, the great fact in Presbyterianism is its power to create a life-long bond between minister and people, to make an intellectual man the real teacher and trainer of the minds of a number of persons; to leave with them, as a life-long possession, in this and the next world, a deep sense of what Christian Character can be. This can only result from years of pastorate and preaching, training of the young, guidance of office-bearers, a profound and unwavering devotion of heart and mind and physical strength to 'the Evangel.' It can only result if the people are capable of being so impressed. But the Scottish people usually are."

I can truthfully claim that my constant concern has been to furnish fresh food for reflection every time I appeared before the congregation, in order that the people should be built up in the faith of Jesus Christ whom I have aimed to make the Alpha and Omega of my teaching, even as the Apostle Paul shows that Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end of all events. All my studies and pursuits I have sought to make contributory to the prosperity of St. Gabriel Church, which has ever been uppermost in my thoughts and plans. I have been conscious indeed of limitations. Possessed of a frame very sensitive to atmospheric changes, my success in presenting truth with clearness and force has often depended upon my body's being in a plus condition physically.

A CAUSE AS WELL AS A PEOPLE.

My ministry in St. Gabriel Church has not only been to a people, but also in support of a cause. The people are a constantly changing quantity. I have seen at least two generations pass away—first, those somewhat advanced in life when my pastorate began—not one of these remains with us; then, those who

were about of my own age when I came here; and they, too, have almost all gone over to the majority, so that I feel somewhat solitary, although my sympathies with the young have enabled me to keep fairly in touch with those who more recently have come upon the stage with us. But while those composing the congregation have varied from year to year, some are still with us who joined in welcoming me to St. Gabriel's on December 13th. 1866; and to them my heart goes out to-night in grateful acknowledgment of their fidelity and loyalty.

RELATION TO FORMER MEMBERS.

Of the many who have graduated from St. Gabriel's into other churches, in the city and elsewhere, it is a gratification to know that they have generally given a good account of themselves in the congregations to which they have been joined. They are still dear to me as a portion of the flock which it was given me to feed. In the great day of account I shall be answerable for the measure of faithfulness which I showed in pressing upon them the first things in the life of spiritual beings, as surely as I shall be responsible for my dealings with those who have been with me in the closing years of my ministry; and they who became separated from St. Gabriel years ago will be accountable for the use to which they put my services, as truly as for the services of those under whose ministry they last sat.

But St. Gabriel Church existed all these years not for any particular set of individuals, but for a cause, and all that were interested in furthering that cause had a right to the best services the Church could render. That cause was upholding and promoting the circle of truth, contained in the Scriptures, as understood by the Reformed Church of Scotland. Not that a Presbyterian minister is consciously in leading strings. In the presentation of what I believe to be the teaching of the Word of God, I have never gone to the standards of our Church to see how they viewed any question that came up for consideration. No

preacher in the land has had a freer hand than I have had; but doubtless the warp and woof of my teaching and reflection, if compared with our symbols, would be found in accord with them. That is to say, I hold that those who framed our confessional standards were religious giants, men profoundly learned in the Scriptures, and possessing a keen discernment of spiritual things; so that every earnest teacher, who gathers his views from the Bible alone, must be in accord with the conclusions of those men of God, although his mind may not have been dominated by them when seeking the truth.

CONDITIONS OF LONG PASTORATE.

And I have never lacked hearers in delivering my message. When a man first enters upon a new sphere, especially if he is young, as I was when I came to Montreal, there is the attraction of novelty in his voice and style and personality generally. All these things, however, soon become familiar and cease to be influential. All that differentiates one from another, in appearance and manner and style of utterance, does not suffice long to sustain him and secure for him attention. It is the weight of his message that alone will give him staying power. Nor must he have an inordinate craving for a numerous audience, for that may proceed from vanity, and is not necessarily a condition of success. Our Lord was content to preach the gospel to a few; and every faithful disciple must be on his guard against despising opportunities of proclaiming the glad tidings to moderately-sized audiences.

CHANGES IN MONTREAL.

The situation in Montreal has greatly changed since my ministry here began. The limits within which the people lived were yet comparatively restricted, and so the distances they had to travel to church were short, and the attendance, morning and evening, was larger than it is to-day. It was possible to secure, even as

late as the seventies of the last century, crowded audiences at the anniversaries of the several religious societies of the city in the great St. James Street Methodist Church. Montreal is now too big to allow of any such gatherings. The population of the city has more than quadrupled in my time, and it now covers more than four times the space it occupied in 1866. The increase in population has required a corresponding increase in church accommodation; but it has also made it possible for every minister and congregation to be to a considerable extent eclectic—people having a larger choice in which they are free to follow the bent of their individual preferences; and fortunately people will sometimes travel a long way to enjoy the services of the minister who they find best meets their needs.

Other changes have also taken place. In 1886 we moved from St. Gabriel Street to the edifice in St. Catherine Street, which we have lately parted with. It was an important crisis in our history. That building was not situated exactly in the spot we would have chosen had we to erect it; for it was too near other churches of our denomination, and the site that would have met the need best would have been nearer Bleury Street and further up than St. Catherine Street; but Providence threw the offer of the church into our hands, and the results which followed, spiritual and financial, show that it was a wise move.

SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

Then, serious problems grew out of other changes which have taken place in the last forty-three years. The Word of God does not, in the estimation of many, occupy the position of unquestioned authority it did then. It has been attacked from two quarters —from the side of science, although science and religion, with which it deals, are not to be measured by the same rule. The advance made in the knowledge of the physical world has not been accompanied by any similar advance in the realm of the moral and spiritual. All the materials for dealing with the

latter, that we have in our hands to-day, we possessed then. The Word has been attacked also by pretentious scholarship, and many of those of whom better was to be expected have effeminately yielded in good measure to it, appealing to people's own imaginary conception of Jesus Christ, rather than insisting upon the Christ of the New Testament record, and forgetting what the Apostle Paul urged, with reference to a single item in that record, "if Christ be not risen our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain, ye are yet in your sins."

ATTITUDE OF INDUSTRIAL CLASSES.

A change has taken place, too, in the attitude towards the Church of the industrial classes. There has been developing a tendency to separate themselves from the body politic and count themselves a community distinct from the rest of mankind; and along with that, and perhaps growing out of it, a withdrawal in large measure from the public services of the Church. This tendency is surely to be deplored, and certainly does not spring legitimately from the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

PRESENT DAY CONCEIT.

The most silly of the weaknesses of our time, perhaps, is the conceit engendered in the present generation, and too much ministered to by appeals from both press and pulpit, that the twentieth century stands by itself, and is nowise bound by what was taught and thought in previous centuries. This conceit arises from looseness of ideas and speech. The twentieth century is not an entity or a force, but a factitious term, invented by men to mark the succession of events. Truth is eternal, as God, from whom it proceeds, is eternal; and what was true previously is true still. The Lord has revealed no new truth during the last nine years affecting sin and salvation, the matters of supreme importance to mankind.

CRAVING FOR AMUSEMENT.

One change more I mention, the wholesomeness of which may be questioned, and that is the craze for witnessing athletic contests which has invaded the society of young men especially within the past few years. We have only to compare the columns of the press of to-day with what you find in the newspapers of forty years ago, to realize how absorbing the interest in sport is on the part of the readers of those papers; for we must assume that the conductors of the press only supply what is demanded of them. The passion for amusements is still further ministered to by moving picture shows and other cheap theatrical displays, the result being a general demoralization of the minds of the young, making seriousness of thought almost impossible. You all know that I do not take morose views of life. I believe in an out-of-door activity. I cannot myself do without it. I believe also in innocent means of mental recreation; but it is an entirely different thing when people make its enjoyment the main aim of their lives. The line has to be drawn there; and the Saturday afternoon holiday should not be so abused as to unfit or indispose people for the services of the sanctuary on the Lord's Day.

CURE FOR THE TROUBLE.

To meet this situation, there is a temptation to those whose business it is to guard the interests of religion to set up counter attractions in the Church. We have only to revert to the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ, regarding the weak tendencies of His day, and the uncompromising attitude of the Apostles regarding prevailing vices, to be convinced of the futility of any such method of providing against the inordinate craving for amusement. The cure is to be found in the homes of the people, backed up by the influence of those in authority in the Church, who should not lay stress on meretricious attractions, but should only rest on the solid upholding of truth in the pulpit, and

a reverend service of worship. Parents should keep in their hands above all things the direction of their children's religious education, rather than allow them to wander to Sunday schools and places of worship which they may find for themselves, according to their fancy.

I foresee that the work of the Church in the future will lie more in contact with individuals than with people in masses, and that visiting in the home will have to be resorted to increasingly. Organized churches as centres of Christian activity, however, will still be required, and ministers as leaders, devoting all their time and energy to Christian work, will still be indispensable.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

But I must leave it to those whose work in large measure lies yet before them to deal with these problems, as well as others which may arise for solution. I am putting off the harness, feeling that I have outlived my generation, and in some measure outgrown my surroundings. I am devoutly thankful to God who put me, so unworthy of the great distinction, into the ministry of His Son, and has given me so great and varied opportunities of speaking for Him as His ambassador. I have to thank you also, my beloved people, for your unvarying kindness to me, and for the heartiness with which you have received my ministrations in the pulpit and in your homes; as well as for the handsome provision you have made for my declining years. I hope to live the remainder of my days and die among you; and so, although this is my last service as your responsible minister, I do not feel as if it were a farewell from you as friends and co-workers with God. My voice and pen will yet be at the Lord's disposal as He may see fit to use me, and as I may have strength given me.

FRUITS OF A LONG MINISTRY.

As to the spiritual results of my ministry, I desire to speak with all humility and deference to the judg-

ment of Almighty God, whose prerogative it is to re
the hearts of men. "The day alone will declar
how many souls have been born into the kingdom
our Lord under my pastorate. It is not the mann
with us to be demonstrative as regards our spiritu
state; but I have been afforded glimpses into the inn
life of a great multitude, in the course of forty-thr
years, that have cheered my heart and strengthen
my hands. I have always proceeded on the convictio
that God's word is "quick and powerful," and ha
sought to obtain a lodgment for it in the people
consciences and hearts, leaving it with the spirit
God to make it effectual to men' salvation; and
have been fain to content myself with the test fu
nished by the Master Himself—"By their fruits y
shall know them"—and it has been a joy to me t
witness the process of character-building in generatio
after generation, seeing the people growing in gra
and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesu
Christ. A profound sense of duty has been wit
me—duty to God, to His Church, and to you H
people. My life has been a busy one, yet it has bee
a happy one. We have had our anxieties and trial
together. I have been with you in your joys an
sorrows, as you have been with me and mine in ours

St. Gabriel Church has played no inconspicuou
part in the history of the city and country, and
feel confident that it has good days and great in
fluence in store for it yet in some form or other. I
has fallen to me to span more than one-third of the
123 years it has existed; and I have the satisfaction
when laying down my office, of feeling that I leave
behind me a cause very much stronger than that
which I was chosen to champion forty-three years
ago; and the credit of this result to-day must in part
be ascribed to the efficient assistance which you pro-
vided me with, during the past three years, in the
persons of the young men, Messrs. Woodside and
Campbell, with whom it has been a great comfort and
joy for me to work.

I thank all those in the congregation who have
laboured with me in the Gospel—the Elders, Trustees,

Sabbath School, Choir, Mission Societies, Young People's Association, the Men's Guild, and all other organizations past and present — without whose hearty co-operation, the measure of success had in St. Gabriel's would have been impossible.

And so I close with adopting the words of the Apostle in the text as heartily my own: "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified."